

Creation Care – Worship Aids

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 104:24-35

Call to Worship

Job 38: 1-41

For dramatic effect, you could solicit a commanding/booming, slightly sarcastic/ironic voice to read this passage over the sound system but unseen by the congregation. First, set the scene with this synopsis of the story of Job:

Many of us know the story of Job. The broad strokes, the main points of the oldest story in the Bible. Satan asks God if he can test Job's faith and God agrees, as long as Satan doesn't threaten Job's own life. In a few swift moves, Job loses almost everything he has: his livelihood and possessions, his children, and his health. Job takes himself out into the middle of nowhere to contemplate what has happened and consider his own response to God. A few well-meaning friends show up to counsel him. "Curse God and die, one suggests. They can't understand how Job stays so calm. Job does have questions for God, and the bulk of Job's book in the Bible is taken up with his rumblings and prayers. And at the end of the Story, God finally shows up to answer for himself. But instead of direct answers to Job's questions or clear explanations for Job's suffering, God puts Job in his place, with questions of his own.

Genesis 1:1-2:1

Genesis 9

Psalm 104

Revelation 21-22



MUSIC

All praise to you (Stewards of earth) (Omer Westendorf VU 297)

All Things Bright and Beautiful (Cecil Frances Alexander, SASB 25, VU 291)

Fairest Lord Jesus (SASB 177, VU 341)

For beauty of prairies (Walter Farquharson VU 303)

For the beauty of the earth (Folliott Sandford Pierpoint, SASB 28, VU 226) (Choral arrangement by John Rutter)

Great is thy faithfulness (Thomas O Chisholm | William M. Runyan, SASB 983, VU 288)

If on my soul (SASB Chorus 72)

Morning has broken (Eleanor Farjeon, SASB 35, VU 409)

O mighty God (Carl Boberg, SASB 39)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow (Thomas Ken, SASB 959, VU 541)

The earth and all who breathe (Ruth Duck VU 295)

This is my Father's World (Malthie Davenport Babcock, SASB 959, VU 296)

Touch the earth lightly (Shirley Murray | Colin Gibson VU 307)

SASB – Salvation Army Song Book

VU – Voices United

PRAYER

Have one leader read each stanza of the prayer and have the congregation respond with the refrain, then pause for a moment of silent prayer before continuing the next stanza.

In a world that is crying out in pain because of imbalance, chaos and sin, we, Your church, pray for harmony in the cosmos and deep peace in the world.

Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, hear our prayer.

We pray for the health and survival of all species according to the pattern you laid out at the beginning of time, that each part of your creation would have its season, and that the divine rhythm of life would prevail over destruction and extinction.

Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, hear our prayer.

We pray for the restoration of beauty and the flourishing of all living things, may we recognize Your glory in that beauty and work to see creation thrive. May we join our voices with the rocks and trees and rivers in praising You.

Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, hear our prayer.

We plead for the coming of your kingdom to earth, that your justice will rule over us, your love work in us, and that your ways will become our ways.

Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, hear our prayer.

We ask that you turn our hearts from greed, from selfishness, from impatience and pride; that you would release us from the cycles of consumption that leads to destruction of the earth and causes us to neglect our neighbours and fellow creatures.

Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, hear our prayer.

We pray that the church as a whole and we as individuals would live in full knowledge of the love you poured out to create the world, and live in great anticipation of your restoration, renewal and re-creation.

Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, hear our prayer.

ALL: Make us aware of what needs to be done and courageous enough to live differently.

Amen.

CHILDREN'S TIME

Read *The Lorax*, by Doctor Seuss (If you don't have time in your service to read the whole thing, split it half and read over two weeks.) After reading the story, discuss with the children how the world has become just like the place in the story: smoggy and gray, animals are in danger. Talk to them about the story of creation and how God meant for people to speak up for and take care of creation just like the Lorax. Challenge them to do just what the Once-ler suggests at the end: plant a tree, take care of it, and protect it from getting chopped down.

Sing "Who's the King of the Jungle?"

Who's the King of the Jungle? (ooh, ohh)

Who's the King of the Sea? (bubble, bubble, bubble)

Who's the King of the Universe?

And who's the King of me?

His name is J-E-S-U-S, Yes!

He's the King of me.

He's the King of the universe, the jungle and the sea (bubble, bubble, bubble)...

OTHER

Play the song "Go Outside" by the Robbie Seay Band while people prayerfully consider the words.

SERMON

Who's the King of the Jungle?

Show slides of a trip you've taken to some natural wonder: mountains, or ocean, or beautiful desert...or even to the zoo. Talk about it in detail. What did it look like? What did it do? How did it sound? What did it smell like? Describe its character and intricate beauty. What was it like to be up close to that kind of magnificence? Sense of majesty, awe, wonder?

This is something like what God is doing in the book of Job. Talk about his creation this way. Almost like God is bragging about what he has done...but the twist is he's letting Job know that he created all that wonder and reminding Job who he is. Job is human. Job is not God. Job was not the centre of the universe. And neither are we.

Back up to Exodus 3:14 to another guy asking questions of God. Moses wants to know who God is. God answers: I AM WHO I AM.*

Hebrew people understood that God was HOLY. That he was OTHER than us. He was I AM. A name too holy to utter. A being to be awed and feared.

To be sure, God loves you. God wants to be with you. God wants to relate to you. But God is other than you.

The world is full of finite things like time and space and matter. But God is OTHER than that. God is OUTSIDE matter. God is BEFORE time and BEYOND space.

Hebrews understood this far better than we do. Example: Manoah – thought he was going to die if he encountered God. Example: Moses – God had to put him in the cleft of the rock so that God' glory wouldn't kill him.

God: I AM WHO I AM. I AM THE LORD.

And if GOD is I AM that means WE ARE NOT.

Job teaches us this.

Job is the first book of the Bible. The oldest book. This story was written down before Genesis, as if the first thing that God wants us to know is that we are not the centre of the universe.

Recap story of Job's faith being tested. Friends give advice. Job stays faithful but asks God for answers: What's going on here? Am I OK? Do you love me?

After pages and pages of Job's friends prattling on with their advice. And pages and pages of Job's own ramblings...God breaks his silence. God answers Job in a storm.

Job asked questions about suffering. God answers with rhetorical questions about the order of creation.

God tells Job that he is OTHER by pointing to creation.

It's as if God is saying: There's Me, and then there is everything I created. Which one are you?

Hint: You didn't do all the cool stuff I've done. You're not God.

Reread passages from Job 38-40 that show a somewhat sarcastic God showing off what he has done; using irony and rhetorical questioning to put Job in his lowly place.

Things to note while reading verses:

Notice God bragging: Have you checked this out? How cool is that? I made it.

Notice that God is enjoying things like waves and snow and sea creatures not because they are useful, but just because they exist and are magnificent. The only point to some of these things is that God delights in them! Example: Behemoth (40:15-24): like a hippopotamus? Like Snuffaluppagus from Sesame Street? "A mythical beast of gigantic proportions." Exceedingly powerful – ranks first among God's works. Live free of fear from other creatures – even humans, but obeys God. Example: Leviathan (41:1-34). A sea creature – like a whale with feet? "A sea puppy". Strong, and armored like a warrior – neither sword nor javelin can penetrate. Awesome and terrifying. But of absolutely no use to human beings.

Notice how God is describing a world without people. God seems untroubled that there are places where no humans live. From God's perspective, man is only one of God's creations – not the measure of all things or the sole test of its worth. So much of creation has absolutely nothing to do with humanity.

Notice that God is talking about a scale so vast that human beings can only catch a small glimpse of it. God's creation will stretch far beyond an individual or community – this is not about Job and his relations. He talks only in the context of the whole of creation.

The story of humanity, since the Fall has been a story of clamoring to be more than human, a striving to be something like God. But here, our God-like aspirations are laid waste. We are part of the created order. There's only two kinds of beings here: Creator and Created. And we are NOT GOD.

GOD is the centre of the universe.

GOD is the ruler of creation.

GOD lets human beings live here and enjoy what he made.

But make no mistake - it does not belong to us. And if we get out of line, complaining, and asking questions and trying to be more than we were meant to be, God sends a storm to put us straight.

I AM and YOU ARE NOT.

Remember the Sunday School/Camp song?

Who's the King of the Jungle? (ooh, ohh)

Who's the King of the Sea? (bubble, bubble, bubble)

Who's the King of the Universe?

And who's the King of me?

His name is J-E-S-U-S, Yes!

He's the King of me.

He's the King of the universe, the jungle and the sea (bubble, bubble, bubble)...

Just a silly song with a gorilla sound effect? Or conveying a profound truth about the way the world really is? What would it be like if we lived as if that were true? Talk about the implications this attitude has for the way we treat the earth. If we had God's narrative to Job running through our heads all the time, what would we do with our garbage? With our cars and electricity? What would we do with our money? Or our time? Would we go outside more? Would we care more about global warming? Animal extinction? Contaminated water supply? Or the overuse of land?

*Translated: THE LORD – the divine name, derived from ancient Hebrew verb: TO BE. Represented in Hebrew by what's called the Tetragrammaton, because it consists of 4 consonants and no vowels – it looks like YHWH - printed that way because Hebrews considered it too holy to pronounce out loud. They never said it. And didn't include the vowels when writing it down just to be sure that no one ever said it...all these years later, no one can know for sure what it really sounds like, but scholars have spent time thinking about what it might have been and assigned vowels to it. Today, we pronounce it YAHWEH.